

## Message Text

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51  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 EB-07 COME-00 SS-15

H-02 /060 W  
----- 040820

R 061716Z MAY 75  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0883  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS  
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS  
USMISSION OECD PARIS  
AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH  
AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, UK  
SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVES GAIN IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

1. IN LOW-PARTICIPATION POLLING MAY 1 FOR SOME 856 SEATS  
ON 36 METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCILS IN THE MIDLANDS AND  
NORTH ENGLAND, CONSERVATIVES WERE MAJOR WINNERS, GAINING  
208 SEATS. LABOR LOST 214 SEATS IN ALL, LOSING CONTROL  
IN BIRMINGHAM, ROCHDALE AND KIRKLEES. LIBERAL PARTY WON  
SOME AND LOST SOME, BUT MAINTAINED ITS PREVIOUS LEVEL.

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2. TURNOUT WAS VERY LOW, IN SOME TOWNS NO MORE THAN 14

PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. LOW TURNOUT COMBINED WITH IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL FACTORS AND PERSONALITIES SUGGEST THAT PROGNOSTICATORS SHOULD BE CAREFUL IN INTERPRETING ELECTION RESULTS.

3. MRS. THATCHER MADE SOME COMMENTS TO A PARTY MEETING MAY 2, CONCLUDING THAT CONSERVATIVE SUCCESSES IN THE BALLOTING FORESHADOWED A FAVORABLE REFERENDUM VOTE (I.E., YES) AND A CONSERVATIVE VICTORY AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. ALTHOUGH HER REMARKS WERE HIGHLY PARTISAN MADE IN PARTISAN SURROUNDINGS, CONSERVATIVES GENERALLY HAVE BEEN BUOYED UP BY THE SWING OF 10-13 PERCENT (FIGURED ON THE LAST LOCAL ELECTIONS IN 1973) AWAY FROM LABOR. MOST CONSERVATIVES ACKNOWLEDGE THE PARTY DOES BEST IN LOCAL AND BY-ELECTIONS WHEN THE PARTY IS IN OPPOSITION, AND YET THEY FIND THE MAY 1 RESULTS ENCOURAGING.

4. LABOR WAS, OF COURSE, DISAPPOINTED AND BLAMED RECENT RATE INCREASES, INFLATION, THE OIL CRISIS, ETC. LIBERALS WERE ALSO DISAPPOINTED PARTICULARLY BECAUSE THEY DID NOT SWEEP IN LIVERPOOL AS THEY HAD ANTICIPATED.

5. WHAT SEEMS MOST INTERESTING TO US IS THE REVIVAL OF CONSERVATIVES IN INDUSTRIALIZED AREAS WHERE THEY LOST HEAVILY IN THE 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS. WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO CONSIDER THIS A BEGINNING TO A GROUNDSWELL SHIFT AWAY FROM LABOR, THE CONSERVATIVES CAN WELL BE SATISFIED WITH THEIR SHOWING. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE UPCOMING BY-ELECTION TO FILL THE HAMLING SEAT, PROBABLY IN LATE JUNE, MAY PROVIDE A MORE RELIABLE INDICATOR OF THE SHIFTS IN ELECTORATE SUPPORT.

RICHARDSON

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